



CAPTAIN GEORGE'S

# Penny Dreadful

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**A WEEKLY REVIEW**





# Guest Column

EUROPEAN MOVIEMAKERS WHO APE TARZAN

BY MICHAEL ALAN FERGUSON

Tarzan for North American audiences is long dead and gone. More than five years have passed since the end of the television series of the same name. American viewers grew tired of the Apeman due to the weekly exposure that the small screen provided. As happened with the western, which died in the United States in the early sixties, European producers cranked out their own Jungle Man epics to fill the gap. This trend actually started some years earlier but did not pick up steam until recently.

Throughout the history of Tarzan in the cinema, the Jungle Man has found himself in many shapes and sizes, under a dozen different names. Edgar Rice Burroughs' hero by this time had become an international figure and had appeared in a number of illegal films.

The Italians, as they do to every type of film, finally caught up to the King of the Jungle in the early sixties, beyond the usual spoofs such as "Toto Tarzan." The first European Tarzan was made around 1961 and was called "Tarzan, King Of The Brutal Force." Joe Robinson starred in the title role. Upon learning of the film's existence the Burroughs lawyers forced the producers to remove all mention of Tarzan from the film. To avoid a long court battle Tarzan was called Thaur in Europe while he became and plays television under the guise of "Thor and the Amazon Women." Robinson and director Antonio Leonviola both repeated on it.

The word in the Italian capital was out; the Jungle Man's name was now taboo. In 1964, Tarzan prowled around in the person of Ralph Hudson in the film "Tarzak and the Leopard Men." The cover-up continued: "Zambo, King of the Jungle," "Zartan" and "Karzan, the Most Fabulous Man of the Jungle" (1971). Karzan in particular had more than its title to suggest reference to the Burroughs character. The film starred Johnny Kissmuller Jr. The actor in the title role may really be Hunt Powers, an ex-star of the afternoon soap "General Hospital." Powers, who was once listed as the film's star before release, has done a half dozen other films for the same director, Miles Deem.

In the late sixties Spanish director Manuel Cano started a revival of the Tarzan name, with Steve Hawkes in the lead. Unlike the Italian

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producers, Cano never tried to hide the identity of his hero. The first film in the series was released as "Tarzan In The Grotto Of Gold" (1969) apparently without much trouble from the Burroughs Estate because a sequel later appeared. It took Cano three years before Hawkes returned to the screen in "Tarzan and the Rainbow." These two films were co-productions between Spain and Italy. The same years brought David Carpenter to the role in Jose Luis Merino's "Tarzan In the Minds Of King Salomon." The latest actor to take to the jungle is Richard Yesteran for J. L. M. Bonns' "Tarzan and the Secret of the Jungle" and Profilmes of Madrid's "Tarzan and the Legend of the Diamonds" (1973 and 1974, respectively).

The future of Tarzan in the cinema has lately been left to the Spaniards. Even if we never get to see their work, due to the Burroughs Estate, let's hope that these filmmakers do more justice to the original Tarzan than some of the attempts made by Hollywood.

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# KARZAN

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# PETE HARRIS

**TEEVEE NOTES:** The less said about "Nick And Nora" the better. A taped ABC-TV Wide World mystery inspired by the characters created by Dashiell Hammett for his 1934 novel, *The Thin Man*, this 90-minute no-budget exercise in tedium generated no suspense, no air of mystery and none of the spirit of the *Thin Man* movies with William Powell and Myrna Loy. The sad thing is that it had two leads who, given the right script and director and an adequate budget, could have become reasonably good facsimiles of Nick and Nora Charles. Craig Stevens, however, merely seemed shaky instead of languidly debonair and Jo Ann Pflug, because of the script, vacillated between rich-bitch petulance and the affability that became a trademark of Myrna Loy's unforgettable portrayals of Nora...**I'LL DRINK TO THAT:** Buffalo TV stations more and more seem to be rediscovering movies of the 1940s. This week, channel 4 ran, in primetime, *The Westerner* (1940) with Gary Cooper and Walter Brennan. Channel 2 is running *Gentleman Jim* (1941) with Errol Flynn as boxing champ James J. Corbett on Monday, March 17, at 3 p. m. Channel 7 has scheduled *They Died With Their Boots On* (1941) with Flynn as Custer on Saturday, March 22, at 10:30 p. m. and the same channel has *Sergeant York* (1941) with Gary Cooper on Monday, March 24, at 10:30. ... Dale Robertson gets a second workout as 1930s G-Man Melvin Purvis in an ABC-TV telefeature called *The Kansas City Massacre*, based on the slaying of gangster Frank (Jelly) Nash and four lawmen outside Kansas City's Union Station on June 17, 1933. As I've said before, Robertson is absolutely the wrong physical type to portray Purvis (just as Ben Johnson was wrong in the role in the 1973 feature, *Dillinger*, with Warren Oates) but that doesn't seem to bother the people who make such movies. Bo Hopkins appears as Pretty Boy Floyd... Another upcoming ABC-TV film, slated for April 14, is *I Will Fight No More Forever*, based on the ordeal of the Nez Perce tribe which, in 1877, chose to stage a 1,600-mile running battle rather than give up their territory and go to a reservation. Ned Romero portrays Chief Joseph and James Whitmore is General Oliver O. Howard. The two-hour movie was filmed on location in Mexico... ABC also is producing a two-hour television movie and series pilot based on the characters introduced in the theatrical film *Souder*. Newcomers Harold Sylvester and Ebony Wright will recreate the roles played in the original feature by Paul Winfield and Cicely Tyson... Irwin Allen has completed a TV movie loosely based on *Swiss Family Robinson* and featuring Martin Milner, Pat Delaney, Michael Wixted and Eric Olsen as the Robinsons, Cameron Mitchell as "a colorful rascal marooned on the island" and John Vernon as an "exiled British soldier of fortune"...

**I CAN HARDLY WAIT:** Anthony Franciosa is starring in a TV movie and series pilot called *Matt Helm* in which he'll be a private eye instead of a secret agent.